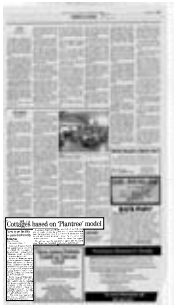


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³⁰⁹⁻¹³⁶ Cottages based on 'Plantree' model

New type facility is patient-friendly

By Mike Foley

STAFF WRITER

mfoley@greenvillenews.com

Greenville Hospital System's new skilled nursing care center — called the Cottages at Brushy Creek — is based on the "Plantree" model, an attempt to humanize patient care.

At its core, Planetree, a non-profit organization founded in 1978 and based in Derby,

Conn., is patient-centered. Instead of focusing on what's best for the institution, hospitals and nursing homes commit to improving medical care from the patient's perspective.

By encouraging "healing partnerships" between care givers and residents and by changing the design, look and even the atmosphere of the institutions, Planetree seeks to change everything about patient care, said Les Parks, administrator for the Cottages at Brushy Creek.

"This is the exact opposite of the typical, institutionalized

nursing home," Parks said.

According to Planetree's Web site, its model of care recognizes the importance of architectural and interior design in the healing process.

The site also says the Planetree Model has developed a growing body of scientific data that points to improved patient outcomes and satisfaction, due to design factors which are home-like, barrier free, support patient dignity and encourage family participation in care.

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Cottages herald a new kind of 'nursing home'

By Mike Foley

STAFF WRITER

mfoley@greenvillenews.com

Take a few seconds and draw a mental picture of a nursing home.

You may picture a drab, cold, sterile institution filled with bed-ridden seniors.

What you might be thinking — tile floors, fluorescent lights and all — is sometimes reality. Try as they might, many nursing homes are anything but homes. They're more like hospitals.

The problem is, no one wants to live in a hospital, said Les Parks, administrator for the Cottages at Brushy Creek. Set to open in late August, The Cottages smash the stereotype, Parks said.

"It's like walking into your home," he said. "It's a real home for the elders who live there."

The new concept, Parks said, is an extension of the "Planetree" model

that Greenville Hospital System has embraced for years. But that concept — emphasizing healing "partnerships," residential settings and family participation — has largely been used in hospitals for patients needing acute care.

Using Planetree for long-term care is a relatively new development, Parks said. A typical resident is 85 years old and isn't going to get better and go home again.

WANT MORE?

■ Learn more about Beth Baker's book, "Old Age in a New Age," at: www.bethbaker.net

The second annual "Planetree Continuing Care Summit" is today and Wednesday in Greer. Today's sessions are open to the public. For more information, call: (864) 848-8438.

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GEORGE GARDNER / Staff

At home: Les Parks cooks breakfast for some of the staff at the Cottages at Brushy Creek.

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HOMES

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"This is for people who, for a number of reasons, couldn't live by themselves anymore," Parks said. "They need assistance with walking, bathing, taking their medications. It's 24-hour, skilled care."

But instead of living in anti-septic rooms, in the wing of a hospital, the cottages each have 12 private rooms and a group kitchen, den, dining room, family room, sunroom and a beauty shop.

Crafton Barnett, a Landrum resident whose mother, Elsie Barnett will move into one of the cottages in August from her current residence at Greer's Roger Huntington Nursing Center said the residents get unlimited freedom.

"The cottages are just awesome," he said. "They're high-quality construction and tastefully decorated."

Living in a cottage, instead in a nursing home, is like night and day, Barnett said.

"This concept means you can stay in bed as late as you want, eat what you want, do what you want," he said. "Residents can help with planning meals, cooking meals, everything."

Instead of uniformed nurses, the cottages are staffed with "companions," specially trained certified nursing assistants who each serve three residents during the day, cooking, cleaning, doing laundry and providing personal care.

This type of personal care, in a home-like setting, means residents live longer, more fulfilling lives, said Beth Baker, author of a recently released book, "Old Age in a New Age."

Baker visited two-dozen nursing homes across the country that are utilizing this new model of care that restores dignity.

"What was astonishing to me, was that people were building nursing homes that I wouldn't mind living in," Baker said. "It surprised me."

As she visited nursing homes across the country, she found people starting to paint for the first time even though they were in their 90s. She found children from 100 children from a day care in Seattle sharing meals, art classes and story-time with elderly residents. In Oregon, she found two-thirds of the residents in another location who volunteered to work the organic gardens on campus.

"There was an electricity, a buzz that you can't imagine in some of these places," Baker said. "In a traditional nursing home, you hear people call out and no one answers them. You hear, 'Oh, she does that.'"

"You'll hear awful alarms and have flashing lights. It's a horrible environment and that's because it was OK to marginalize the elderly."

But in the Planetree concept, or in other similar models that go by names such as Green House or the Eden Alternative, the residents are valued.

"Loneliness and isolation is endemic among the elderly, not only in nursing homes, but in society as a whole," Baker said. "But the more you can personalize and individualize care, the more you can help."

Elsie Barnett, who suffers from Alzheimer's, will be one of the current 88 Roger Huntington patients moving to the new \$20 million cottages. Her son said he had tried to care for his mother, his father and his brother

— all Alzheimer patients — and it almost killed him.

"I didn't have the expertise to handle those type of people," he said. "It just about destroyed my health. It was more than I could do."

While Barnett doesn't find fault with the Roger Huntington Nursing Center, he said the Cottages will be infinitely better, citing its resemblance to a traditional home, better security and the ability to prevent wholesale spread of communicable disease.

"It's a new concept that's just going to take off in the next five years," Barnett said.

Right now, only a few hundred of more than 16,000 nursing homes nationwide have transitioned to this type of resident-centered care, Baker said.

"People hate change," she said. "But no one is out there saying, 'This is a really stupid idea.'"

Studies have shown, Baker said, that patients in a Planetree-type environment can reduce the use of costly medications, limit high-employee turnover, lessen dementia symptoms in residents, and have children, pets and gardens as a part of everyday life.

Sixty of the Roger Huntington Nursing Center patients who are making the move to The Cottages are on Medicaid, Parks said. For those with private insurance, the cost is \$172 a day, Parks said.

"That's only \$20 a month more than we're paying now," Barnett said. "I think it's a great deal."

Two of the 12 cottages are specifically for those in need of short-term rehabilitative care, the rest are for long-term care. Each is designed to include people with dementia.

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Dining: Some of the staff at the Cottages at Brushy Creek are eating breakfast at the facility.

